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Presbyterianism since the Reformation:

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AT PHILADELPHIA,

May 4, 1858.

BY

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PHILADELPHIA.
WILLIAM S YOUNG, PRINTER, 52 NORTH SIXTH STREET.
1858.

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Union Theological Seminary
& Presbyterian School of Christian Education
Richmond, Virginia

PRESBYTERIANISM SINCE THE REFORMATION.

"In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." When that predicted day arrived, a fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened in that city of the Great King,—at the beginning of the new dispensation—and the little stream that issued from it speedily swelled into a mighty river, that moved onward with a resistless tide, working out for itself new channels in various directions, covering every land whose soil it touched with unwonted beauty, and quickening the nations which drank of its waters with a new life. So it flowed for many a year; but while, to the eye of sense, the stream became broader and deeper, it gradually lost its transparent purity and its healing efficacy, as the distance from the original fountain increased. But it never ceased in its onward course; though its current might be compared to one of those rivers which, seeming to have reached its limit, in fact, only disappears from view to pursue its dark and silent way far down beneath the ground, coming up again to the surface at some distant spot, from whence its gladsome waters, as if gushing from a new spring head, flow on undisturbed until they mingle with the ocean.

Thus was it with the "living waters" that went out from Jerusalem. During those centuries, well named the Dark Ages, they were lost to view, except that here and there might be seen a little rivulet whose silvery brightness, or a green spot whose delicious verdure gave token that the glorious river was still in being, and moving onward in hidden channels. Ere long it again rises to the surface, and pursues its course in the light of day, and amid the dwellings of men. On the plains of Germany, and amid the mountains of Switzerland, almost simultaneously two fountains appear; not unlike the one opened centuries before in Jerusalem. The streams that issue from them steadily ad-

vance, enlarging as they go, every where spreading fertility and beauty, and converting vast regions which had long been a barren waste into a garden of the Lord. LUTHER and ZWINGLE, to whom I refer, were almost exactly of the same age; the former having been born 10th November, 1483, the latter 1st January, 1484. The social positions of their parents were very different, and there was a corresponding diversity in the training of the *children;* but the higher education of the two *men*—that by which they were specially fitted for the great work, which, under God, they accomplished as Reformers, was, we may say, identical. Both were brought by a way which they knew not into the same school of Christ;—both drank at the same fountain of Holy Scripture; both were quickened by its life-giving waters; and prompted by one and the same Spirit, both began the same arduous task of reform, though for a long time, each was totally ignorant of the existence and doings of the other.

The subject of my discourse is more immediately connected with the life and labours of the Swiss Reformer; but the limits within which I must confine myself, so as not to exhaust your patience, will not allow me to enter largely into the details of Zwingle's history. This, indeed, is the less necessary, as the interesting story is to be found in the work of an author whose name has become like a household word throughout the Protestant world, and whose History of the Reformation is a sort of household book. Suffice it to say, that Zwingle, though bred and ordained a priest of the "Holy Roman Church," like his Saxon brother was kept by God's restraining grace from the dominant vices of his order and his age. In his early years an unquenchable thirst for knowledge was awakened in his soul, and a visit to Italy—made while yet a youth—was the means of exciting an eager desire for the acquisition of Greek, mainly for the purpose of being enabled to study the New Testament in the language in which it was originally written. Just before his ordination he had heard the learned and pious Wyttembach declare, "The time is not distant when the scholastic theology will be abolished, and the primitive teaching of the church restored." "The death of Christ is the only ransom of our souls." These sayings sank deep into the heart of the young priest, like precious seed in goodly soil. He bore them with him to Glaris, his first parish, far up among the Alpine mountains. These germs of the truth in Jesus were developed slowly, but surely; he groped his way cautiously, wearily, in darkness and difficulty, but he was all the while moving in the right direction. He read with care the works

of Augustine, Jerome, and others of the Fathers; but what was still better, he copied with his own hand, in Greek, all the epistles of St. Paul, and even committed them to memory.* And in 1516, the year in which he was translated to the convent of Einsiedeln, he says himself, "I began to preach the gospel." Then and there he set himself vigorously to oppose those grosser forms of superstition, with which he was brought into closer contact in the convent, than in the remote and rural parish of Glaris.

In 1518 Bernard Samson visited Switzerland on the same business which took Tetzel to Germany, to replenish the exhausted exchequer of the Pope by the sale of Indulgences; and he met with a reception at the hands of the Swiss not unlike that which his brother peddler of pardons experienced in Saxony. Towards the close of the same year 1518, Zwingle was removed to Zurich—the city which was henceforth to be the scene of his labours until the end of life—the city with which his name is indissolubly associated as a Reformer,—and which by his efforts speedily became the radiating centre of influences which spread over the larger part of Switzerland, and to the regions beyond. "My purpose," said he to the Chapter at his first interview with its members after his removal to Zurich, "my purpose is to expound not only the lessons of the day—the Dominicals—but the whole gospel of St. Matthew in course. I shall explain it, not according to the rules of human traditions, but comparing Scripture with Scripture, for the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, to advance the salvation of souls, and to instruct men in the true Christian faith." This promise he faithfully fulfilled—opening up the pure word of God to the vast crowds that thronged the noble old church in which he preached, and denouncing the reigning superstition, especially indulgences, with a zeal as fervent, if not with an eloquence quite so Boanergistic as that with which his Saxon brother electrified the people of Wittemberg. From this time he advanced with cautious, yet rapid strides, into the light of the gospel, going on from strength to strength, and as he did so the fury of his enemies increased.

But he was not alone in his earnest struggles to emancipate the church of his native land from the bondage in which she had been held for ages. There was Haller, at Berne, engaged in the same glorious enterprise; Œcolampadius at Basle, Blaser and Hofmeister at Constance, Wyttembach at Brienne, Myconius at Lucerne, Lambert at

* Ruchat, i. 72.

Lausanne, and other towns on the beautiful lake of Geneva. The writings of Luther, which circulated with such immense rapidity over Germany, were reprinted by Froben, the famous printer of Basle, and helped on the good work in the North and East of Switzerland. But in this noble company of confessors and reformers Zwingle holds a pre-eminent position. For a time the Reform movement, though starting independently from two distant points, was both in its inner life and its outward manifestations, a unit—the unquestionable product of one Divine Agent. All who embarked in it were animated by one spirit, they all sought one end, they all proclaimed the one vital truth of salvation by Christ alone. But ere long the infirmities of the human instruments betrayed themselves—notes of discord were heard—and energies which should have been concentrated upon the contest with Rome were in part wasted in intestine strife.

In 1524* the flames of the unhappy Sacramentarian war burst forth, through the agency of the well-meaning, but hot-headed zealot, Carlstadt. The particulars of the debate would carry us too far away from our present purpose. Enough to say, that from this point the histories of the Reformed and the Lutheran divisions—the Swiss and the Saxon branches of the one Reformation Church—may be said to begin. However much the lovers of union may see, and they cannot fail to see a vast deal—to lament in this dispute, yet, as Roeder observes, some good came of the obstinate tenacity with which each side clung to their respective views.

During the few remaining years that Zwingle was spared to the church, his life was an almost ceaseless struggle with various parties. He was cut off in the midst of his days, on the disastrous and bloody field of Cappel—the result of a war which he had done his utmost to prevent. He died comparatively young in years, the honoured instrument in commencing and in giving a certain complexion to the work of Reform, though it was reserved for another and still greater man to complete it—John Calvin, of Geneva.

Luther and Zwingle, almost from the moment that they appeared as Reformers, while, as has been said, proclaiming the same gospel of the grace of God, occupied each a stand-point of his own. Luther's mind and heart were fixed with a special intensity on that grand truth—justification by faith alone—the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ;* and, provided this was safe, he attached little importance to forms and

* Hospinian, Hist. Sac. ii. 49.

ceremonies of outward worship, or to the polity of the church. Zwingle, on the other hand, while no less urgent in maintaining the doctrine of justification by faith alone, also insisted upon the absolute supremacy of the word of God, as the only rule by which all matters, whether of faith, worship, discipline, or polity should be tested and determined.* Whatever could not bear this touchstone he stood ready to condemn and reject; and hence he desired the removal of many things in the frame-work and liturgy of the church which Luther willingly tolerated, and which have consequently kept their place in the Lutheran churches of Germany. "Luther," says Planck, "did not easily accept an opinion which appeared to him not to harmonize with the doctrine he deemed fundamental. He unconsciously made this doctrine (justification) the criterion of truth; and hence, while he was not in much danger of receiving as truth, an error, he often rejected a truth as being an error. Zwingle, on the other hand, was apt to accept as truth whatever seemed to be such at the first view, regardless whether it fitted in with his other opinions or not, and thus obtained, perhaps, a wider view of truth than Luther, but truth mingled with more error." Whether this comparison be strictly just or not, I think that those acquainted with the distinctive theology of Zwingle, and his modes of thinking, cannot fail to recognise the hand of a wise and gracious Providence in the subsequent raising up of that distinguished man—the Reformer of Geneva—who, more than any other of his contemporaries, gave form and pressure to the theology of the Reformed church—who, so soon after entering the field of action, won for himself and the little city where he laboured a world-wide renown—whose influence is still so potent, and which will be felt in every land that Presbyterianism embraces within the curtains of her habitation.

The fire kindled in Switzerland by Zwingle and his co-labourers, very soon spread to France. Indeed, here as elsewhere, the materials for it had been long preparing, and the train had been laid by men who knew not what was going on in other parts of the church, men who had been baptized with the same spirit which had been given in such abundant measure to Luther and Zwingle. The long and lively quarrel between Louis XII. and the turbulent Pontiff Julius II.—1512—and the decisions of the Assembly of the French clergy at Tours that the king might make war upon the Pope, and compel him by force of arms to carry out the decrees of the Council of Basle,

* This is very plainly to be seen in the 67 Propositions or Articles of Zwingle, published 1523. *Niemeyer*, Col. Con. 10—13.

must have weakened the hold of the Papacy upon many minds in France; and they encourage the belief that if the Reformation had begun thirty years before it did, France would have been numbered among the Protestant kingdoms of Europe.* As it was, the spread of Protestantism in that country was very rapid, and it numbered among its adherents persons of all ranks. Cardinal St. Croix, the Papal Nuncio, in his correspondence with Cardinal Borromeo, testifies to the immense progress which the Reformed Church had made in France, and states that he then—1561—considered it doubtful on which side, in the grand struggle then going on, France would ultimately be found.† Beza states that there were 2,150 congregations belonging to the Reformed Church of France, many of which were of enormous magnitude, some of them having nearly 10,000 members. That of Orleans, for example, had 7,000, and was served by five ministers. Or we may form an estimate of the number of the Reformed churches by the number of their martyrs. "It is reckoned," says President Edwards, "that there were martyred in this kingdom for the Protestant religion 39 princes, 148 counts, 234 barons, 147,518 gentlemen, and 760,000 of the common people, all within thirty years." "The Protestant Church of France," says Dr. Croly, "was a burning lamp for half a century, unquestionably one of the most illustrious churches of Europe. It held the gospel in singular purity. Its preachers were apostolic. Its people the purest, the most intellectual, the most illustrious of France. Before the close of the sixteenth century, it amounted to two and a half millions of souls."‡

Among the Protestants of France, doubtless there were some who

* Vers le milieu du règne de François I., il restait à peine un coin de province dans le royaume ou la Reformation n'ent pas surgi et gagnè quelques ames. *Hist. Prot. du Poitou*, par A. Lièvre, i. 26.

† See his letters in Aymon's Synodes de France, i.

‡ I need not tell you by what means this once glorious church was almost annihilated. No wonder that the children of the bloody Bourbons, amid the horrors of the Revolution, were forced to drink the bitter cup which their fathers had forced thousands, of whom the world was not worthy, to taste. No wonder that they have been driven from the throne they disgraced, with a Cain-like mark upon their foreheads. Their bloody bigotry, however, failed of complete success. "La France occupe une place à part. Elle n'est pas protestante; la Reforme y a etè ecraseè; mais, avant d'y succomber, elle a joué un trop grand rôle pour ne pas laisser de traces dans l'esprit national; aussi n'est elle pas Catholique comme l'Espagna et l'Italie. Vaincu comme religion, le Protestantisme, en succombant, y a laissè son principe generateur, l'examen, et attachè aux flanez de son antagoniste la critique qui mine et devore les choses fausses."—*Hist. Prot. Poitou*, par Aug. Lièvre, i. 9.

sympathized with the distinctive views of Luther, rather than with those of Zwingle, or Calvin, but the revived *church* of France was unmistakably Reformed, and not Lutheran. She was out and out Presbyterian. Her Confession of Faith, consisting of 40 Articles, and her Form of Polity, which contained the same number of articles, both of which were drawn up by her 1st General Synod, composed of eleven members, who met at Paris for this purpose, at the peril of their lives, in 1559, put this beyond all question. This Confession, by the way, like many others of that and the succeeding age, is both a confession and a testimony. "We believe that Jesus Christ, being the Wisdom and Eternal Son of the Father, took upon him our nature, so that he is one Person, God and man. And therefore we detest, as contrary to all truth, those heresies with which the churches were troubled in former ages; and specially we detest the devilish opinions of Servetus." Art. xiv. So the others.

On the north-east of France lies a singular region, of limited extent, but densely peopled by an active, enterprising population, part of whose territory had been gained by successive generations from the sea, at a vast outlay of toil and money. It bore the name—from one of its most striking features—of the Low Countries, and was divided into seventeen Provinces, each of which had its own usages, laws, and franchises. The number of large towns and cities within the limits of these Provinces was singularly great. They were among the chief seats of the manufactures, the commerce, and the wealth of that age. During the Middle Ages they had played no mean part in public affairs, and their rich burghers were very jealous of their municipal rights. At the commencement of the Reformation the Low Countries were the inheritance of Charles V., and thus descended to his son Philip, King of Spain. Here, as elsewhere, the soil had been preparing during many years for the reception of the good seed, in ways, and by instruments, of whom time will not allow me to speak particularly.* Within less than five years from the time when Luther, at Wittemberg, and Zwingle, at Glaris, lifted up a banner because of the truth, the Reformation had gained a foothold, and had won many zealous adherents in Antwerp, Brussels, and other cities and villages of the Low Countries. The quickening influence came in a double stream from Saxony and Switzerland, but for a number of years no such sectarian name as Lutheran or Zwinglian was known. The early and rapid

* See *Ulmann's* Reformers before the Reformation, who has given many interesting details concerning Goch, Wessel, &c.

spread of the gospel in the Low Countries is attested by the sanguinary decree, or "Placeat" of Charles V., issued in 1521; but in spite of his bloody edicts, which were rigorously executed, the good cause flourished exceedingly; and in the course of the next ten years it could count its adherents by thousands in Flanders, Holland, Utrecht, Groningen. But it received an early and terrible check by the sudden, furious, and desolating invasions of the Anabaptists—the Mormons of those days—whose excesses were, of course, represented by Romanists to be the natural fruit of the doctrines preached by Luther and Zwingle. Indeed, it is a wonder that these excesses did not produce an instant and general reaction in the popular mind in favour of the old religion, rendering all attempts at reform impossible. Such, possibly, might have been the result, but for the attempt to introduce the Inquisition into the Netherlands, which caused the memorable "Revolt of the Netherlands,"—the subject of an interesting monograph by Schiller, and which has more recently engaged the pen of a countryman of our own.*

At first, the whole seventeen Provinces—in all of which the Inquisition was detested with an equally perfect hatred—shared in the rebellion. But ultimately the ground which Rome had lost in ten of these Provinces was fully regained, and the remaining seven—the poorest and smallest of them all—were left to maintain the unequal and apparently hopeless struggle with the proudest and mightiest monarchy of that age. They issued in 1581 a formal Declaration of Independence, and established a confederation under the name of the *Union* of *Utrecht*, from which the fathers and founders of our own government derived important suggestions when framing the Constitution of these United States, if they did not get from this source the original idea of a Federal Union. The history of that tremendous contest for civil and religious freedom, for national independence and liberty of conscience—the first to which Protestantism gave birth—is one of the most glorious chapters in the church's annals. It is the history of a struggle, protracted for almost half a century, and one which involved an expenditure of wealth, of suffering, of life really incalculable; it includes the record of atrocious cruelties, the wholesale butcheries of the monster Alva, of the unconquerable courage of the Dutch—of the unsurpassed strategy of their noble leader, William (of Orange) the Silent, well styled by Motley the Washington of the 16th

* Motley. Rise of the Dutch Republic.

century,—of the birth and early triumphs of the Dutch naval power, of the infliction of the deadly blow to the greatness of Spain, which so speedily caused her to decay until she became what she so long has been, like ancient Egypt, the basest of kingdoms. And it may well be a source of gratification to us that it should have been reserved for a countryman of our own to have given the most graphic narrative of those stirring and eventful times. No one who reads his most interesting volumes, will be surprised to learn that the memory of the fierce struggle to throw off the yoke of Spanish tyranny and Romish bondage is almost as fresh in Holland, as is that of our own Revolution among ourselves.

It was during this fearful tempest which raged with such violence for so many years, that the Reformed Church of Holland assumed a distinctly organized shape, revised and adopted the Confession of Faith originally drawn up by Saravia, De Bres, and others, at Brussels, (known as the *Belgic*,) in 1563,*—held her first Synods, and erected her platform of discipline and government. Mean while the bitterness gendered by the Sacramentarian controversy had grown in intensity, and the distinction between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches had become broad and permanent. Within the Church of Holland there were many who earnestly desired that she should assume the Lutheran type—not, however, from any sympathy with Lutheran doctrine, but the great mass of her membership were otherwise minded.

This result was, under God, largely owing to the influence which Geneva began to exert after Calvin had become firmly established in the church and Academy of that place. Least among the cities of Switzerland in population and political power, she was destined to exceed them all in the extent and duration of her moral power. Within the bosom of this beautiful town, the refugees from persecution—Italians, French, British, German—sought and found, all of them, a cordial welcome, some of them a permanent home. Hither, too, there came from various and distant regions many youthful scholars and

* *Venema* says that prior to 1563, the Reformed in the Low Countries used the Formularies of the Belgic Churches in London, drawn up by John a Lasco. The above date is the one assigned by *Saravia*, who, in a letter to Uytenbogaert, claims to have been one of the authors of it. "Ego," says he, "me illius Confessionis ex primis unum fuisse authoribus profiteor." It was, he adds, first written in French, by "that blessed servant of Christ and martyr, *Guido de Bres*." This French edition was written, according to *Laurentius Corpus*, &c., p. 7, in 1561. But *Niemeyer* thinks the date is doubtful. *Coll.* 53.

candidates for the ministry to listen to the teachings of the greatest theologian of his age. Numbers came from Flanders and from Holland, so that Geneva was in Calvin's days at once an asylum for the exile, the nursery of the churches, the radiating centre of influences which left their abiding impress upon regions so remote as the heather hills of Scotland, and the vast plains of Poland. Here John Knox sojourned for a considerable time, and on the banks of the Leman Lake he matured the system of doctrine and discipline which he carried with him to his native land,—a system destined there to encounter many a fierce onset from its bitter and bloody foes, a system which through successive generations has proven the Divine origin of its essential principles by its manifold and precious fruits, by the quickening and elevating influences it has invariably exerted upon individual life, upon national character, whenever and wherever it has been allowed to operate with the freedom which it claims.

To complete this very hasty survey of the Reformed Church, (that is, of Presbyterianism,) we should next require to pass into Germany. In many towns and districts of the old German empire, there were (and still are) large bodies of Protestants who rejected the distinctive tenets of Lutheranism, and adhered to the Reformed Church. Next we should need to visit Poland and Hungary—Poland now dismembered, Hungary now annexed; for in each of these ancient kingdoms the Reformed faith was cordially accepted by multitudes of all ranks.* Time, however, allows me to do no more than to point to these countries; and I have run thus rapidly over the field won by Presbyterianism, mainly for the purpose of bringing out clearly its wide extent. Comparing the Lutheranism and the Presbyterianism of the old world numerically, there probably would not be found to be much disparity between them; perhaps the Lutheran Church may have the advantage. But we are sure that every candid and intelligent person will admit that the Reformed Church has filled much the most important rôle in the history of Protestantism, during the last three centuries.

1. She has been compelled, at different periods, to maintain a much more arduous and bloody fight for the common faith, than her sister. Luther's own conduct at the Diet of Worms, and elsewhere, clearly enough evinced his own unflinching courage, and his readiness, if need

* The late Count *Krasinski* published a History of the Reformation in Poland, containing a great mass of information of interest to us as Protestants and Presbyterians.

Dr. *Merle d'Aubigné* has also edited a History of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

be, to lay down his life for Christ's sake and the gospel's; and, beyond a doubt, thousands of his immediate followers would have cheerfully gone with him to prison and to death. But they were not exposed—unless in a few cases—to this severe ordeal. In all those lands in which Lutheranism became predominant, it almost from the outset of the Reformation obtained the protection of the State, and its energetic support as the recognised faith of the State. The Reformed Church, on the contrary, can point to a noble army of martyrs. In France, Flanders, Holland, Scotland, Poland, Hungary, the very soil has been drenched with the blood of her sons and daughters. Multitudes more suffered the loss of all things; and, to keep a good conscience, went forth as exiles from their native land, not knowing whither they were going, nor when nor where they would find another home.* And surely, this is no slight honour which the Divine Head of the church has put upon that great section of it—of which we form an integral part—that to her so eminently has the grace been given not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

2. She has been more or less intimately connected with all the great struggles for religious and civil liberty. I name *religious* freedom first, not only because it is first in importance, but also because men fought and bled for *it* first; men won it first; and but for this priceless conquest, we have reason to believe that our fathers would neither have understood nor cared for their merely civil rights. It was the felt thraldom of conscience that roused and nerved them for the high endeavour to cast off the yoke of political bondage; and the overthrow of ecclesiastical tyranny opened the door for political freedom.

Luther's mind and heart were fixed—as already mentioned—with an absorbing and exclusive earnestness on that vital truth—salvation by grace alone. He did not care to disturb the existing order of things in the church any farther than the safety of his "*articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*," plainly demanded. Enjoying from the first the powerful protection and the warm sympathy of the Good Elector, and seeing in the State the only safeguard against the blood-thirsty vengeance of Rome, it is no wonder that he did not deem it

* It is therefore with singular propriety that the church of our fathers adopted as her corporate symbol the *Burning Bush*, with the legend, "*Nec tamen consumebatur*;" while that of the Reformed Church of France chose a somewhat analogous seal founded on that memorable reply of Beza—"Sire! it behooves us not to give blows, but to receive them; yet remember that the Church of Christ is an anvil, which has broken many a hammer."

necessary to study very carefully, or define very accurately, in what relation the church and the State should stand to each other. If the question ever presented itself before his mind, he probably dismissed it as one whose discussion, at that time, would be productive only of mischief to all parties. Hence the civil magistrate was allowed to exercise, and in the end to appropriate to himself, a controlling power in and over the church. And this, by the way, was the sole reason why a small minority in Holland wished the Belgic church to become Lutheran. It was not that they cared a whit for consubstantiation, but they did care a great deal for power and patronage; they were noblemen and town councillors, who wished to wield a predominant influence in the church—to say who should be her pastors—to have the right of summarily shutting the mouth of any unruly talker, who should take it into his head to preach political sermons, or who should apply the law of Christ too closely to men in high places.

It was quite otherwise with the *Swiss* Reformers. At Zurich, Basle, Berne, Geneva, and other cities, this question was forced upon them. Their plans of Reform embraced Christian discipline, as well as Christian doctrine. The idea of an elect, called, holy church, utterly and eternally distinct from the world, was prominently before their minds;* and in their endeavours to realize this conception, to bring the church again under the laws of her Divine Head, they found antagonists in the very magistrates and nobles who had zealously helped to break the chains of Romish bondage. No doubt some of these men co-operated with the Reformers from purely selfish motives, and hence turned against them so soon as they fancied that their selfish schemes were in danger. But in many cases, I am disposed to ascribe the reluctance of the civil magistrate to establish the system of discipline for which the Reformers contended, not wholly to love of power. "The burnt child dreads the fire." They had just escaped from ecclesias-

* "Oportet omnino semper fuisse, nunc esse, et ad finem usque seculi futuram esse Ecclesiam, viz., e mundo evocatum vel collectum cœtum fidelium, sanctorum, inquam, omnium communionem eorum, viz., qui Deum verum, in Christo Salvatore, per verbum et Spiritum Sanctum vere cognoscunt, et rite colunt. Sunt isti omnes unius civitatis cives, viventes sub eodem domino, sub iisdem legibus."—*Confessio Helvet. Posterior. Niemeyer*, 499. Many similar statements might be quoted from *Reformed* Confessions.

Luther, no doubt, would have assented to most of these; but the Augustan Confession simply says that the true church is an assembly of saints; the visible church includes saints and sinners; and then in the Apology, the Romish theory of a hierarchy is discussed at great length.

tical tyranny in one form; and they may have said to themselves, If we accept this new discipline, may we not be preparing for our children, if not for ourselves, another form of church tyranny as grievous and grinding as that from which we have just been liberated?

Be this as it may, the difficulty between ministry and magistracy arose. The patience of the gentle *Œcolampadius*, of Basle, was sorely tried. In September, 1530, he writes to his friend Zwingle in these terms:—"The civil power is becoming more insupportable than Antichrist, since it wishes to rob the church of her authority. The sword belongs to the Prince, but Christ has established remedies of his own for the healing of those who fall into sin. He does not say—'If thy offending brother will not hear thee, tell it to the government; but, to the church.' I do not, with the Anabaptists, hold that the magistrate is outside of the church—*en dehors de l'eglise*—but that his functions are different from those of the church." At a later day, Calvin* was obliged to maintain a long, hand-to-hand contest with the same power, in defence of his grand principle that the church is the free and independent kingdom of the Redeemer, and must be governed, in all matters peculiar to it, solely by the laws of her Divine King, Lawgiver, and Lord. I need hardly remind you that this distinguishing principle of the Reformed Church also gave rise to earnest contendings in Holland, though they were soon overshadowed by another, and a doctrinal dispute, which I shall presently notice. In Geneva, Basle, Zurich, the strife was comparatively short in duration and unimportant in results. The last, the longest, and much the most momentous battle for freedom, was reserved for another field,—in the island home of our fathers, whither John Knox returned after an exile of years, bearing with him the spirit and principles of Calvin—or I should rather say, of prophets and apostles; and unfurling the banner on which was inscribed the legend, "For Christ's crown and covenant," he and his compeers and successors fought with varying results—one while, apparently with the glorious prize in actual possession—and then again, seemingly and utterly defeated; the battle, like a precious heirloom, is handed down from sire to son, through successive generations, for more than a century and a half; and the final issue of it is that an ancient and royal dynasty is overturned—its representatives are driven forth by an outraged people to wander in perpetual exile—three kingdoms are revolutionized so as to become the great bulwark of Protestantism—thirteen colonies are planted upon a new

* See Calvin's Lettres, by Bonnet.

continent, whose founders were forced on its barbarous shores, a refuge from oppression, but whose united voices are ere long heard proclaiming in the ears of astonished Europe, that "All men are created free and equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And now, if any one asks, What are the consequences of the contest begun three centuries ago,—where are the precious fruits of it to be found? here, on the very spot where we stand, we might reply, in the well known word of a great architect of a former age—*Circumspice.*

I do not mean to say that the great and good men of Reformation times saw the full bearing of the principles for which they so earnestly contended, nor that they were wholly exempt from the persecuting spirit of the church in which they had been trained, and of the age in which they lived. It would have been a miracle if they had been. But I do mean to affirm that they were not in fact the persecutors they are so often represented to have been. A full discussion of this point would require more time than can be now given to it. But the fact is beyond dispute that Geneva, and Rotterdam, and other cities of Switzerland and Holland, were the dwelling-places of many an exile on account of religion, whom neither England nor Germany would protect. The fact is undeniable that the only parts of Europe in which religious toleration actually obtained, were precisely those in which the Reformed Church had a dominant influence.* That Calvin and others of his day, to a certain extent, accepted "persecuting principles," I do not deny; but these principles, so far from being the native growth of their system, were wholly antagonistic to it; the two were united, not organically, but in a sort of mechanical way; and wherever the system was allowed free scope, these principles were speedily thrown off, and disappeared. Indeed, the practice of the Reformers was a good deal better on this head than their belief.

* On the accession of the Bloody Mary to the English throne, the members of the foreign churches in London were forced to leave England. On 15th September, 1553, John a Lasco, with 175 others, embarked in two Danish vessels. A storm forced the ship in which Lasco was to enter the port of Elsinore, in Denmark. At first the king hospitably received the poor pilgrim; but his Lutheran chaplain changed his mind, and they were forced, in spite of an inclement season, to embark. *Westphall*, another Lutheran, denounced them as martyrs of the Devil. *Bugenhag* said they should not be regarded as Christians. At Hamburgh, Lubeck, and Rostock, they met the same treatment under the same influence. The records of the Reformed Church will be searched in vain for a similar instance of intolerance.—*Krasinski.* Reform. in Poland, i. 264—6.

3. The Reformed Church has given to the world the ablest defences of the common faith; and during the period of her distinct existence, she has contributed more largely than any other to the stores of Christian literature. She has been, in one sense, much more polemic than her Lutheran sister; she has been engaged in a great many more doctrinal discussions, and has produced a very great number of world-renowned theologians.

Until the early part of the 17th century, the unity of the Reformed Church was not disturbed by any serious doctrinal dispute. The numerous Symbolical books put forth by her several branches, *e. g.*, the 1st *Basle* Confession, the 2d *Basle*, or *Helvetic;* the *Gallican*, and 1st and 2d *Scottish*, the *Belgic*, the later *Helvetic*, the *Hungarian*, the *Anhalt*, the *Mark*, the *Tetrapolitan*, the *Bohemian*, the *Consensus* of *Zurich*, the *Consensus* of *Poland*, though drawn up by men widely separated from each other by distance, race, and language, still exhibit a remarkable unity of sentiment in regard to both the fundamental and the subordinate doctrines of the Christian system. As compends of Scripture truth they are much more complete than any of the Lutheran Symbolic books to be found in the collections of the latter by Hase and Francke; they cover much more ground, for they embrace discipline and polity, as well as faith. Some of them are more explicit on particular points than others, but their indisputable harmony is an indisputable proof of the real oneness of the churches of the Reformation. They themselves recognised this unity; and though each national or cantonal church was independent, regulating its own usages, and its own local affairs in its own way, they regarded and treated each other as sisters—members of one household, having a common faith, common interests—bound to each other by the most sacred ties. Our mother church of Scotland had a Confession of her own framing, "exhibited to the estates in Parliament—as a Doctrine grounded upon the infallible word of God. August, 1560." Yet Calvin's Catechism, and the Palatine, or Heidelberg Catechism, were adopted by her, were printed for the instruction of the youth of Scotland, and are accordingly included in Prof. Dunlap's "Collection of Scottish Confessions," (vol. ii.) Andrew Melville was for many years a professor in one of the colleges of Poitiers; John Welch, the son-in-law of Knox, when banished from his native country, repaired to France,—in three months' time was able to preach in French, and became pastor of the church of Nerac, and afterwards of St. Jean d'Angely.* John Forbes, Robert Dury, John Sharp, Andrew Duncan,

* Lorimer. Protestant Church of France, pp. 64—5.

Alexander Strahan, the fellow-exiles of Welch, were settled—some of them in Holland, others in France. When the Arminian controversy arose in Holland, it was not viewed simply as a Dutch affair, but as one which concerned the whole Reformed Church; and very properly, because truth is not local. Accordingly, every branch of the Reformed Church, great and small, was invited to send representatives to the General Synod at Dort—an invitation which all would have accepted, if the civil power had not interposed, (as it did with some to prevent.) In this affair even the Lutherans were not overlooked. So, too, when the Westminster Assembly was called to remodel the constitution of the British churches, one avowed design of that venerable body was to bring these churches into closer affinity with the Reformed churches abroad.

That differences of judgment on some points should be developed in such a body as the Reformed Church, is not surprising. Indeed, taking men as we find them, such differences were the natural result of that great principle, recognised alike by the Lutheran and the Reformed churches, but clung to by the latter with such singular tenacity, and in defence of which she so often and so sturdily resisted Kings and Parliaments, namely, that God alone is Lord of conscience,—the duty, as well as the right, of private judgment in matters of religion. If I should say to my neighbour—"Friend! you are not only *free* to form your own opinions on all points of doctrine and duty, but you are *bound* to search the Scriptures for yourself, and from them alone derive your beliefs; but, mark you, if you do not come to exactly the same conclusion with me, I shall have no fellowship with you," he might fairly retort upon me—"That is a strange freedom which you allow." Perfect coincidence of judgment is not to be looked for, except among perfect men. Of course there must be agreement, for else how can two walk together?—but in order to fellowship, they may demand a too perfect agreement in too many things; or, on the other hand, they may be satisfied with agreement in too few. They may err in the way of an absolute uniformity, or in the way of latitudinarian tolerance. There is a freedom of inquiry, a generous discussion, which exerts a wholesome influence upon those engaged in it, causing in the end imaginary or real disagreements to disappear; a ventilation of the grain which blows away the chaff, and leaves behind only the pure and precious seed; and there is a daring speculation, an intrusion into things which we have not seen, and cannot discover here below—liberty converted into licentiousness, whose effects are evil, and evil only.

Undoubtedly there have been men trained in the bosom of the Reformed Church, who, in the exercise of their right of private judgment, have attacked and endeavoured to unsettle some of the vital parts of the Christian system. But these attacks have invariably called forth a noble array of able defenders, who have displayed a banner because of the truth. Certainly no one of the great branches of the Protestant Church has done so much for polemic and systematic theology, as a science, and as a department of literature, as the Reformed. A long and illustrious list of names will at once occur to you, including Calvin, Beza, Diodati, De Mornay, Ursinus, Cameron, Turretin, Pictet, Demoor, Witsius, the Vitringas, Owen, Charnock, Ridgely, Edwards.

Again, no other of the great branches of the church have done so much for practical and experimental theology, and even for Scriptural exposition. In the first-named department of sacred learning, what works can be placed along side of those of Baxter, Flavel, Owen, Howe, Guthrie, Boston, and many more whom it were tedious to mention? The commentaries of Calvin are to this day regarded by the most competent judges as among the most perfect of their kind; and within a few years have been republished by a Lutheran editor. Then there is Beza, Diodati—Piscator, worthy of being more widely known than he is—and good old Matthew Henry, unrivalled for the degree to which he has contrived to combine the results of criticism with proverbial philosophy, quaint humour, and the richest unction. Of the commentators of the Dutch school I might also speak, did time permit. But it would be unpardonable not to mention the truly admirable Notes on the whole Bible prepared by order of the Synod of Dort.

While on the subject of the services of the Reformed Church to the cause of theological learning, I may add that she has produced a great multitude of ornaments of the pulpit, and a vast amount of sermonic literature, which will compare with the most splendid specimens of sacred eloquence of ancient or modern times. Indeed, it was to the stimulating influence of the Reformed Church of France that the Gallico Roman church was indebted for those great preachers who adorned the age of Louis XIV. Fenelon, Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, are illustrious names; but not more so than those of Daillé, Drelincourt, Claude, Saurin. And when this stimulus ceased, the glory of the French pulpit departed.* But I may not dwell on the tempting topic.

* "The Gallican church no doubt looked upon it as a signal triumph when she prevailed on Louis XIV. to repeal the Edict of Nantes. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and Pascals?

4. While the Lutheran Church has had no fixed polity, the Reformed Church has every where maintained the same great system of church government. When I say this, I do not mean that precisely the same form obtained in all her branches. These forms were to a certain extent modified by the circumstances of the country in which the church was established. For example, the little city and canton of Geneva did not require such an array of judicatories, rising from sessions to Assembly, as existed in France or Scotland, nor did she have them. In the early Reformed Church of Scotland, superintendents exercised a certain supervisory and ministerial function, but they were subject to the superior authority of Presbyteries and Synods. Again, the ruling eldership was at the same period, in the same church, rotatory, like that of Holland and the Dutch churches of our own country. At a later day the office of superintendent fell into disuse—and ruling elders were chosen to serve for life. In the French Church, deacons as well as elders, attended the meetings of Colloquies, or Presbyteries, and of Synods. I wish I could enter more fully into this subject, for the sake of the practical lessons which it teaches, and show how this diversity of usage on subordinate points was combined, and was recognised as consistent with the essential principles of Presbyterianism.

Though I have drawn so largely on your patience, I cannot conclude without expressing my very great delight that this Historical Society has been founded, and already has become a fixed fact. With all my heart do I rejoice that the Presbyterians of our own country have discovered one spot on which they can stand together, and one work in which they can engage with a common and a hearty zeal. And I would fondly hope that this brotherly union of effort in collecting the scattered and decaying materials of history—in studying the records of the past,—the glorious struggles, the bloody persecutions, the heroic labours, the grand achievements—and also the occasional errors or mistakes of our common ancestry—is the harbinger, and will prove to be a means of effecting a larger and more comprehensive union.

She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular as she pleased; and amid the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains and retired to rest."—*R. Hall's Works*, ii. 266.